The Allergy and Environmental Health Association
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Supported by:

The Trillium Foundation

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Ms Evelyn Gigantes, M.P.P.
Minister of Health,
10th fl - 80 Grosvenor
Toronto. M7A 1R3

16 January 1991

Att: Cathy Fooks

Dear Ms Gigantes,

I am writing to express further concern about the abuse of human rights of those psychiatric patients whose central nervous system dysfunction is caused or significantly exacerbated by environmental sensitivities.

There is ample evidence in scientific literature dating back at least to 1908 which indicates that central nervous system can be affected by sensitivities. The Thomson Commission (1985) found that environmental hypersensitivity often affects the central nervous system. The Ashford-Miller report - "Chemical Sensitivities, a Report to the New Jersey State Department of Health" - recommends checking for sensitivities before embarking on a psychiatric workup.

On September 26th Perrin Beatty, National Minister of Health and Welfare, wrote Charles Caccia indicating his support for the Ashford-Miller report, and stating that "The authors' general conclusion that the search for environmental causes in a patient should precede psychiatric workup is fully supported by departmental officials".

The World Health Organization and several other international authorities have recognized that environmental sensitivities can affect central nervous system, along with other organ systems. Hospitals in Britain and the United States, along with clinics in Ontario, Nova Scotia, British Columbia, and New Brunswick, have found that symptoms ranging through anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, manic depression, dyslexia, inappropriate aggression, and others, have been relieved when substances the individual is sensitive to have been avoided.

That has also been the experience of a good percentage of members of the Allergy and Environmental Health Association of Canada, a non-profit charitable organization which has existed since 1969. (The Ontario Division is currently sponsored by the

Trillium Foundation.) Many of our members have found that when we are exposed to substances we are sensitive to we experience central nervous system problems from among those listed above.

The Chief Legal Counsel of the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office of the Ontario Ministry of Health wrote to what was then called the "Psychiatric Hospitals Branch" mentioning increased awareness of these problems, and calling for attention to them in the diagnosis and treatment of psychiatric patients in provincially run hospitals. He stated "treatment should include placing the patient in a 'clean room' while in hospital, and discharge planning to a clean hospital environment".

I have approached the Mental Health Facilities Branch for two years now, and I am sorry to say that I have reached the conclusion that they are not dealing with this issue in good faith, that <u>they are deliberately and knowingly miss-stating the concern brought forward and factors related to it</u>, and that this is leaving an undefined portion of the psychiatric population at risk and subject to ongoing damages.

I believe the deliberate and knowing denial of existing information by those in the Mental Health Facilities Branch and the Medical Officers of the Hospitals involved has probably also contributed to deaths.

I am aware that these are serious charges, reflecting on the professional credibility and ethics of those persons involved, yet I am prepared to defend them because I believe them to be both true and in the public interest.

Thanks again for your interest,

Sincerely

Chris Brown
Branch President - Ottawa
(613) 837-7173